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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups

Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by, for and with persons with disabilities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report reviews (a) the international normative framework relating to the mainstreaming of disability in development and (b) progress made by Member States, the United Nations system and civil society in promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities and mainstreaming disability in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It concludes with policy recommendations.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/12, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of that resolution during the fifty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development.

2. The report reviews (a) the international normative framework relating to the mainstreaming of disability in development and (b) progress made by Member States, the United Nations system and civil society in promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities and mainstreaming disability in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[1] and other global development frameworks. The report also provides an overview of approaches to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by, for and with persons with disabilities and sets out action-oriented recommendations in this regard.

II. Disability in the current global development landscape

3. Building upon decades of work by the United Nations, the current international normative framework on disability-inclusive development consists of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,[2] the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other major international development instruments.[3] The framework recognizes disability as a cross-cutting issue and defines the pathway for ensuring the equality and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development.

4. The unanimous adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the General Assembly represents a milestone in the mainstreaming of disability as an integral part of sustainable development.[4] Since then, the Assembly has repeatedly underscored that the inclusion of the rights, needs and well-being of persons with disabilities is necessary to achieve inclusive and sustainable development for all.[5]

5. The nearly universal ratification of the Convention,[6] together with the adoption and implementation of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which countries pledged that no one would be left behind, demonstrate the concrete commitments of the international community to further mainstreaming disability as both a human rights and a development imperative.

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[1] Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1).

[2] General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I.

[3] These documents include the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (General Assembly resolution 69/15, annex), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (General Assembly resolution 69/283, annex II), the New Urban Agenda (General Assembly resolution 71/256, annex), the Agenda for Humanity (A/70/709, annex) and other key instruments concerning disability, such as the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/37/351/Add.1 and A/37/351/Add.1/Corr.1, annex, sect. VIII, recommendation 1 (IV)), the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (General Assembly resolution 48/96, annex) and the outcome document of the high-level meeting on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities: the way forward, a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond (General Assembly resolution 68/3).

[4] General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I, preamble, para. (g).

[5] In General Assembly resolution 68/3 and other resolutions.

[6] As at 30 August 2018, there were 177 States parties to the Convention.

6. Recognizing the persistent marginalization too often experienced by persons with disabilities, the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on disability and development and the 2030 Agenda adopt a holistic approach to redressing inequalities faced by persons with disabilities. They recognize disability as a cross-cutting development issue[7] and call for targeted actions in specific areas such as education, employment, urban development and human settlement, inequalities, and disability data and statistics for Sustainable Development Goal monitoring and evaluation. Such actions respond to the call in the 2030 Agenda to reach "the furthest behind first" and further support the empowerment of persons with disabilities as agents of change to achieve the Goals for all.

7. In this context, persons with disabilities should be assured of equal opportunities in society, facilitated by enabling environments and living conditions, and supported for their empowerment and participation in decision-making that affects their lives. It should be noted that the empowerment of individuals with disabilities and their communities also requires capacity-building to respond to changing circumstances in the economic, social, political and cultural spheres (see E/HLS/2018/1, para. 11).

III. Progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities

8. The present report is based on information provided by Member States,[8] the United Nations system[9] and civil society organizations[10] on the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/12. It also takes into account other available sources, including the voluntary national reviews for the 2017 and 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development, in particular information concerning (a) progress in mainstreaming disability in development policies and programmes and in the mobilization of resources; (b) progress in promoting accessibility;[11] (c) concrete actions taken to eliminate discrimination and to equalize opportunities for the participation of persons with disabilities; and (d) steps taken to increase and improve disability data and to address the gap in data collection and evidence-based analysis. The following sections provide information on the progress made and challenges remaining in these areas.

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[7] The 2030 Agenda promotes the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of disability or other status (target 10.2). It seeks to ensure equal access to justice (target 16.3), universal health coverage and access to quality health care (para. 26 of the Agenda), universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all (target 6.1), infrastructure development with equitable access for all (target 9.1) and safe, accessible transportation and public spaces for all while giving a special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities and others (targets 11.2 and 11.7).

[8] Submissions received from Argentina, Belarus, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, El Salvador, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Mauritania, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Ukraine.

[9] Submissions received from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the World Health Organization.

[10] Submissions received from the European Disability Forum, the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies, Sightsavers and the World Blind Union.

[11] International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard 9241-171:2008 defines "accessibility" as the "usability of a product, service, environment or facility by people with the widest range of capabilities". The present report follows that approach when it refers to the term in a narrow sense, taking into account that there are other instances in which the term may be used to mean "access".

A. Member States

9. Persons with disabilities continue to face a disproportionately high risk, compared with the general population, of experiencing poverty and social exclusion. Member States have been taking action to overcome this, including through the development or amendment of national legislation, policies, development strategies and plans of action for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In carrying out this work, Member States have focused on a range of issues and sectors, including quality education; skills training, employment and decent work; access to health care and rehabilitation services; poverty eradication and social protection; housing and urban development; and cross-cutting areas that pertain to the participation of persons with disabilities, including accessibility, participation and disability data and statistics (see A/73/211/Rev.1).

1. Quality education

10. Universal access to all levels of education, which is essential to the achievement of sustainable development for all, is also a critical measure to empower persons with disabilities to become full participants and agents of change in society. Member States reported the adoption of a range of policies to promote inclusive education for children with disabilities. Portugal established principles and norms that guarantee inclusion, identified measures to support learning, developed specific curricular areas and mobilized resources to meet the need of every child and youth with disabilities. Greece implemented an institutional framework to ensure equal opportunities for all to learn in mainstream educational structures by focusing on attendance in classes with parallel programmes of individualized support for students with disabilities. Lithuania reported on its efforts to transform special education schools into resource centres that provide counselling services and on its provision of educational assistance and assistive devices to students with disabilities. Maldives introduced free education, including the provision of support specifically to children with disabilities to increase their enrolment.

11. Limited access to educational opportunities, combined with a lack of accessible physical educational environments, facilities, services, learning materials and necessary dedicated support for both learners and teachers, continues to present challenges to persons with disabilities, especially those living in remote and rural areas, in terms of receiving quality education. A number of Member States reported on their policies concerning accessible environments for schools and universities. Cyprus provided free transportation, as well as specialized teachers, care assistants and assistive technologies to persons with disabilities. Saudi Arabia had created national centres that provide school transportation for students with mobility disabilities. Panama made progress in promoting the inclusion of students with disabilities, with an increased number of trained teachers focusing on the needs in rural and indigenous areas.

12. Educational support for youth and adults with disabilities helps open the gateway for them to promote positive change in society and development. The Philippines mandated the provision of disability support funding in its Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act. India introduced several programmes to provide scholarships at various levels to persons with disabilities, including for the pursuit of professional and technical education in institutions in India and abroad. India also launched an online library of accessible books, in line with the Marrakesh

Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled.[12]

2. Skills training, employment and decent work

13. Persons with disabilities experience persistently low rates of employment, and their potential contribution in the labour market therefore remains largely untapped. Member States have taken a number of specific actions to address this. These include increasing investments in human resources and building the capacity of persons with disabilities by ensuring universal access to quality education and by offering technical vocational education and training. Lithuania and Saudi Arabia established vocational rehabilitation programmes. Australia introduced a labour fund, which provides small- and medium-sized companies resources for the training of individuals, including persons with disabilities. Canada implemented two major mechanisms, including the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities and the Workforce Development Agreements. The Opportunity Fund provides financial support to national and local authorities and third-party organizations to train Canadians with disabilities to enable them to gain work experience and obtain and retain employment or self-employment. The Workforce Development Agreements provide funds to local authorities for the development and delivery of capacity development services for citizens focused on job-oriented skills upgrading and work experience.

14. The effective promotion of employment and decent work for persons with disabilities requires both non-discrimination legislation and specific policy measures, such as affirmative action. Member States, including Cambodia, Canada, India, Indonesia, Lithuania, Malta and the Philippines, reported on progress made in taking such approaches. Colombia carried out outreach activities to promote awareness of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market. It provided advice and labour intermediation services to employers and issued a series of decrees to promote the employment of persons with disabilities, establishing a quota system in the public sector, coordinating the efforts of the private sector aimed at the development of employment-oriented skills for persons with disabilities and their families and carers, and introducing an incentive mechanism for companies to hire persons with disabilities.[13]

15. Enabling conditions and incentive mechanisms to encourage the participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market are also of critical importance. Several Member States introduced innovative policies to encourage the employment of persons with disabilities. Georgia launched a national programme on employment support services, in which job coaches and wage subsidies were provided to support job seekers with disabilities, as well as to incentivize employers with vacancies. Greece initiated a new job guarantee programme in the private sector to create new jobs and provide incentives to enterprises to hire unemployed persons, including those with disabilities, by subsidizing their wage and non-wage costs. States also put in place initiatives to create enabling conditions in the workplace and beyond for persons with disabilities. Canada introduced the draft Accessible Canada Act to ensure a barrier-free employment environment. Belgium developed a mechanism to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities, including through the provision of vocational training, the promotion of employment and the accessible adaptation of workplaces, which benefited over 7,700 persons with disabilities in 2016.

[12] Available at www.wipo.int/meetings/en/doc_details.jsp?doc_id=245323.

[13] Colombia, Decree 392 of 26 February 2018.

3. Access to health care and rehabilitation services

16. Persons with disabilities often experience obstacles and challenges in accessing health-care services owing to attitudinal, physical and financial barriers, including discrimination and stigmatization; lack of availability, accessibility and affordability of a full range of quality health-care services; and limitations on support provided by health insurance. Several Member States reported on measures taken to facilitate and support access by persons with disabilities to health care. Belgium and Malta, for example, implemented national policies on universal health-care coverage for persons with disabilities.

17. Accessible health care and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities, as well as training programmes for health personnel on the rights of persons with disabilities, were also highlighted as necessary steps for persons with disabilities to access health-care services on an equal basis with others. India, Lithuania and Saudi Arabia reported on their efforts to provide barrier-free access in all public and private hospitals and other health-care institutions and centres.

18. Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates also put in place national programmes dedicated to the early identification of the occurrence of disability among children and to early rehabilitation and intervention.

4. Poverty eradication and social protection

19. Persons with disabilities and the members of their households are disproportionately more likely than members of the general population to live in poverty. In many countries, development policies and programmes are focused on poverty eradication for persons with disabilities.

20. Many States provide public services and economic assistance, including allowances, pensions, cash transfers and other social security programmes, to guarantee the basic needs of persons with disabilities. Some States have introduced various programmes to address the acute needs of persons with disabilities living in poverty. Peru adopted a guideline for mainstreaming the disability approach in social programmes, which includes the percentage of persons with disabilities in poverty as an indicator for assessing progress. Ukraine took legislative steps to simplify the procedure for local authorities to provide social protection to persons with disabilities in the form of tax benefits. India reserved a 5 per cent quota for persons with disabilities in all its poverty alleviation programmes and other developmental schemes, with specific attention given to women with disabilities.

21. In 2018, Lithuania increased its social assistance pension for persons with disabilities from €112 to €150. It decided to link this social assistance pension base to minimum consumption needs and, from 2019 on, to recalculate the amount annually to ensure the adequacy of the financial support provided. Ecuador introduced *Las Joaquinas*, a programme to create the conditions necessary for caregivers of persons with severe disabilities, through the provision of seed capital for productive undertakings to support the well-being of both persons with severe disabilities and their caregivers. To ensure that persons with disabilities affected by poverty can enjoy the tax measures in place, Canada also introduced the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program to host free tax preparation clinics.

22. In Saudi Arabia, a unified subsidy system was in place to strengthen participation by persons with disabilities and monitoring mechanisms for the follow-up and evaluation of the provision of social protection.

5. Economic empowerment, including through financial inclusion

23. Member States also worked to advance the financial inclusion and economic empowerment of persons with disabilities, including by ensuring their equal access to personal finance and other forms of financial services. The Philippines reported that national and local governments were required by the General Appropriation Act and the internal revenue allotment to allocate resources for their work relating to persons with disabilities and senior citizens. That was in addition to the conditional cash transfer programme targeting families with disabilities to support them in accessing health and educational services. Indonesia worked with several major banks to guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to open their own bank accounts and encouraged the provision of accessible automatic teller machines equipped with Braille keypads. India reserved a 5 per cent allotment of agricultural land and housing for persons with disabilities in all relevant development programmes and schemes, with priority given to women with disabilities.

24. States also took measures to facilitate access to financing, including microcredit, to enable and empower persons with disabilities to pursue their own businesses and entrepreneurship for a decent and sustainable livelihood. For example, Canada implemented the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, which supported national and regional projects that helped persons with disabilities prepare for, obtain and maintain employment or self-employment. Costa Rica created projects to encourage entrepreneurship among persons with disabilities. The State of Palestine launched a microloan programme to support persons with disabilities in starting their own ventures and joining the productive sectors.

6. Housing and urban development

25. Accessible, adequate and affordable housing is a key concern in relation to the livelihood of persons with disabilities. A number of States introduced initiatives to improve accessibility and increase the provision of housing for persons with disabilities, especially those living in poverty. Canada included persons with disabilities among those most in need in its national housing strategy and provided funding support, through the Enabling Accessibility Fund, of Can$ 15 million annually, for new and renewed housing projects to meet accessibility standards. Lithuania invested in promoting accessibility improvements in housing environments for families with children with severe disabilities. Jamaica introduced lower mortgage rates, specifically targeting persons with disabilities, under its home grants programme. In July 2016, the Russian Federation began enforcing a policy that requires residential premises occupied by persons with disabilities to be equipped with special devices to ensure accessibility and that also provides a preferential rate, reflecting a reduction of 50 per cent or more, for utilities for residents with disabilities and families with children with disabilities.

26. The Philippines required that 10 per cent of all government housing be made accessible to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Cameroon issued a decree to apply its Law 2010/002 on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities, by which persons with disabilities are granted priority in using lodging facilities and renting public lodging at a reduced rate.

27. To ensure that persons with disabilities might access and enjoy the benefits of public transportation on an equal basis with others, Jordan launched initiatives to ensure the accessibility of rapid bus transit in the Greater Amman Municipality. Bhutan, Ireland, Slovakia and Viet Nam also improved their public transport services so that they were responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities.

7. Accessibility

28. Accessibility is well recognized in key international frameworks, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda, as a precondition to ensure that persons with disabilities can fully participate in society and development. The lack of accessible environments, facilities, products and services remained a challenge in many countries, developed and developing alike. A growing number of Member States were taking proactive and comprehensive approaches to address that lack and to promote accessibility.

29. In many countries, accessibility was promoted through constitutional laws and/or sectoral legislation. For instance, Colombia and Mauritania issued decrees aimed at the elimination of architectural barriers.[14] Argentina recently adopted legislation to promote accessible audiovisual programmes, including through closed captioning, sign language and user-friendly design in web pages.[15] Jordan introduced a national plan for removing barriers in existing buildings, facilities, places of worship and tourist sites that extend services to the public, with the full involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the process.[16]

30. Member States also promoted accessibility through the development and implementation of specific national strategies, plans of action and technical standards, in line with the principles of universal design. Peru adopted a national accessibility plan for the period 2018–2023 to incorporate and promote accessibility in its national development strategy, including in the sphere of information and communication. Poland was developing a national accessibility standard, following the principles of universal design and based on lessons learned from its Accessibility Plus Programme, which required the application of accessibility principles to all public works undertaken by central and local governments, agencies and funds, schools and companies that provide services to the public.

31. Member States also undertook initiatives and innovations to advance accessibility as an integral step for achieving inclusive sustainable urban and rural development. Germany considered accessibility a central priority in its National Action Plan 2.0 for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with a focus on the promotion of inclusive social spaces in urban and rural development. Its City of the Future pilot programme is currently being implemented by 52 cities across the country, and is aimed at increasing accessible passenger transportation in local and long-distance traffic. Canada recently appointed its first Deputy Minister of Public Service Accessibility. In addition to allocating Can$ 15 million annually to a programme of the Enabling Accessibility Fund to support the capital cost of accessible construction and renovations, Canada launched an accessible technology programme to co-fund innovative public-private partnership projects to develop new assistive and adaptive digital technologies and devices. El Salvador and Malta undertook initiatives to promote socially inclusive and accessible tourism, as well as the development of small and medium-sized tourist businesses, as part of efforts towards the larger goal of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for all.

8. Participation in policymaking, implementation and monitoring and evaluation

32. The full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in all stages of relevant policy processes is essential for building an inclusive, equitable society for all. Strengthening legal and policy frameworks focusing on ensuring non-discrimination continued to be a priority for many Member States. Canada, Greece, Portugal,

[14] Colombia, Decree 1077 of 26 May 2015; and Mauritania, Decree 2017-169.
[15] Argentina, Laws 26.522 and 26.653.
[16] Jordan, Law 20/2017.

Ukraine and Uruguay reported progress in that regard, paving the way for effective participation and contributions by persons with disabilities in matters and processes that have an impact on them, as well as on the general public. For example, Greece passed a legislative amendment establishing disability status as a "grounds of discrimination" and providing for the participation of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the monitoring process of the work of a mainstreaming mechanism, the National Council against Racism and Intolerance.

33. Limited access to the justice system often hinders the participation of persons with disabilities in society and development. The Ministry of Interior of Colombia took measures to improve accessibility in public buildings and venues to facilitate access to legal and judicial processes by persons with disabilities.

34. Recognizing the catalytic contribution that sports make in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, Canada, El Salvador and Portugal undertook initiatives to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in sports and cultural activities. Australia launched a programme that supports 16 sports in nine countries that deliver activities to address primary risk factors associated with non-communicable diseases, and inequalities experienced by women and girls with disabilities.

9. Disability data and statistics

35. Lack of quality and disaggregated data and statistics on disability remains a gap that hinders the effective implementation of evidence-based policies. Member States have sought to improve data collection and disaggregation through a variety of measures, including capacity development, the strengthening of relevant institutional mechanisms and the allocation of necessary resources. Denmark developed a data platform to track progress made towards all of the Sustainable Development Goals. Colombia established a national disability mechanism and a register for the identification and characterization of persons with disabilities". India initiated its seventy-sixth national sampling survey, covering 21 types of disabilities, and is implementing a project for a national database on persons with disabilities. Panama created a national system of statistics on persons with disabilities to integrate all relevant information about persons with disabilities into a single platform. Indonesia established local statistics offices to reach out to remote populations in archipelagos and sought to address the challenges relating to the collection of disability data that resulted from the use of different definitions of disability.

36. To improve the international comparability of disability data, Germany reported that it supported the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Assistance Committee in applying an inclusion marker focused on disability for the systematic recording and comparability of development finance relating to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the assessment of official development assistance. Cambodia reported that it had included a questionnaire on disability, prepared by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics,[17] in its planned 2019 census to improve the quality of disability data.

B. United Nations system

37. The United Nations system continued to support the efforts of Member States to achieve disability-inclusive development, including by mainstreaming disability

[17] A city group established under the United Nations Statistical Commission, with the key objective of addressing the urgent need for data and statistical information regarding disability that are comparable across nations. More details about the work of the Group are available at www.washingtongroup-disability.com.

across the Organization's operations, policies and programmes. In April 2018, the Secretary-General decided to conduct an institutional review of the Organization's current approach to mainstreaming disability across its operations, with a view to further strengthening concerted action by the United Nations. In addition to some positive recent developments, including the establishment of the Accessibility Centre and the availability of conference documents in Braille upon request, key entities of the United Nations system, especially members of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, are undertaking an institutional review of the approach to accessibility and the mainstreaming of disability across the operations of the United Nations in order to improve the effectiveness of these efforts, strengthen institutional and staff capacity and improve system-wide coordination and accountability.

38. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the focal point on disability for the United Nations system, continued to lead efforts in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities. In 2018, it prepared the first United Nations flagship report on disability and development, which provides an evidence-based analysis of the current situation of persons with disabilities in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Convention at the global level. The Department continued to support intergovernmental processes to advance disability-inclusive development and translate the commitments of the 2030 Agenda and the Convention into action, in close collaboration with Governments, United Nations and regional intergovernmental partners and organizations of persons with disabilities. The Department also promoted capacity-building through training projects conducted at the regional, national and subnational levels in Africa, based upon its toolkit on disability for Africa,[18] as well as a series of capacity development workshops and advisory services offered in Asian countries and Latin America, including Argentina, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

39. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs further launched, in partnership with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), a multi-year development account project aimed at strengthening national capacity in Argentina, Ecuador and Peru to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate effective and evidence-based national policies and programmes for social and economic integration and the inclusion of youth with disabilities. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) continued to support States in mainstreaming disability in the implementation of the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific and the Beijing Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy (see ESCAP/74/22/Add.1, annex), including by establishing a statistical baseline on the status of persons with disabilities in the Asia and the Pacific region. It also facilitated international cooperation, including South-South cooperation, for the mainstreaming of disability in development in Asia-Pacific countries.

40. Specialized agencies, funds and programmes continued to promote disability-inclusive development in their different areas of work. The International Labour Organization produced publications and policy tools on social protection, vocational training and employment for persons with disabilities[19] and collaborated with the private sector and trade unions to promote the employment of persons with disabilities. The World Health Organization (WHO) continued its work, in accordance with the WHO global disability action plan 2014–2021,[20] to remove barriers and

[18] Available at www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2016/11/toolkit-on-disability-for-africa-2.

[19] International Labour Organization, *World Social Protection Report 2017-19: Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2017).

[20] Available at www.who.int/disabilities/actionplan/en.

facilitate access to health-care services, especially those related to rehabilitation and assistive products. A priority list of assistive products[21] was launched by WHO and endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 2018 to promote the inclusion of priority assistive products as part of universal health care.

41. To reach those left furthest behind, in 2017, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) issued the Disability Inclusion Guidelines aimed at operationalizing the commitments in the Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. UNRWA further reported on its first round of training sessions on the Guidelines for 250 staff members,[22] as well as on its carrying out of disability-inclusive programmes in education, relief and social services and protection. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction is strengthening a new stakeholder mechanism that is engaging organizations of persons with disabilities in key global and regional processes, addressing their needs and perspectives in the context of disaster risk reduction and risk-informed sustainable development, urban resilience and financing for development.

42. The urgency of increasing and improving the availability of quality and reliable disability data for the design, implementation and evaluation of development policies has also been noted by United Nations entities. The Statistics Division is coordinating the work of an expert group to update the Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics. As the secretariat of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, it also coordinates work related to methodological instruments to improve disability statistics and data disaggregation, in order to define the dimensions of disaggregation of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators. ECLAC and ESCAP are making efforts, within their respective regions, to support Member States in their efforts to improve the quality of disability statistics in their national statistical systems from the disability perspective and build capacity on data collection methodologies to facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities. WHO, together with the World Bank, developed and is implementing the long and brief versions of the model disability survey. In addition, WHO is working with over 20 countries to strengthen their national statistical systems. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction issued guidance notes in 2017 on the use and recording of disaster loss information and provided training sessions on the collection and use of data disaggregated by disability.

C. Civil society

43. Civil society organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities, working in collaboration with local governments, international organizations, other like-minded organizations and the private sector, have taken action to accelerate the implementation of disability-inclusive sustainable development. Some organizations continued their efforts to mainstream disability into government policies and programmes and to mobilize resources, focusing on poverty, employment, education and accessibility. The World Blind Union, for example, advocated for a comprehensive accessibility act to be enacted at the regional level, within the frameworks of the African Union and the European Union. The World Blind Union also collaborated with software companies to develop affordable navigation and real-time transport schedule apps. The Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies, together with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU),

[21] www.who.int/phi/implementation/assistive_technology/global_survey-apl/en.

[22] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Disability Inclusion Guidelines (2017). Available at www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/disability_inclusion_guidelines.pdf.

launched an initiative on model policies on information and communications technology accessibility for web and audiovisual programming, mobile phones, public access points and public procurement.[23] It also carried out consultative activities and facilitated cooperation agreements for the development of policies on the accessibility of information and communications technology with Brazil, India, Myanmar and other countries. The European Disability Forum supported the development of accessible transport vehicles and multi-modal terminals for public transportation as part of efforts towards the creation of a multi-modal travel chain and ticketing system that will enable persons with disabilities and older persons to travel across the European Union without barriers.

44. Civil society organizations also highlighted the importance of inclusive monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including through the voluntary national review process. As one organization (Sightsavers) highlighted, there existed a need for more information about how civil society could engage with the reporting process. It was further recommended that coordination efforts among government departments on disability issues be increased and that enhanced support be provided for the engagement of organizations of persons with disabilities.

D. Multi-stakeholder partnerships

45. Given the cross-cutting nature of disability, which requires a whole community approach, in recent years multi-stakeholder partnerships have emerged as a promising means for advancing disability-inclusive development. For instance, in Bangladesh, 5,286 union digital centres were established. These are one-stop service-provider centres run by "citizen entrepreneurs" at the community level, aimed at delivering vital information and public services to underserved populations, including persons with disabilities in rural areas. By bringing together the private sector, local governments and citizens themselves, market relevance and sensitivity to citizens' needs were well embedded in these successful bottom-up multi-stakeholder partnerships. They greatly supported the Government in making basic public services universally available. Australia supported Vanuatu in the Vanuatu Skills Partnership, a locally led cross-sectoral initiative that engaged participants and sought contributions from a wide range of stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, in sectors such as tourism, handicrafts and agribusiness. The initiative of Germany on fighting the causes of flight and reintegrating refugees included a focus on persons with disabilities in Iraq, Jordan and South Sudan, with a view to supporting them, as well as their families and communities.

IV. From policy to practice: ways to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by, for and with persons with disabilities

46. In June 2018, the eleventh session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities re-emphasized that the concrete implementation of the Convention was essential and that countries should effect development policies and changes in investment and legal systems in line with the Convention in order to fulfil the central pledge of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. Full and equal opportunities should be ensured for persons with disabilities for their full participation in society and development. In that regard, new approaches and tools must be sought for mainstreaming disability in national legislation and

[23] Available at www.itu.int/pub/D-PHCB-SIS_A.01.

development strategies, including by raising awareness, promoting accessibility, strengthening the frameworks concerning disability at the multilateral and global level, and continuing and expanding United Nations support to Member States.

47. The preceding sections of the present report have reviewed the international normative frameworks guiding the inclusion and mainstreaming of disability in the current global development context. They have examined the progress achieved by Member States, the United Nations system and civil society in their efforts to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities and to strengthen the mainstreaming of disability in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Based on the findings of the review, some key observations can be made to further advance inclusive development for persons with disabilities.

A. Mainstreaming disability as an integral part of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

48. Disability has been recognized as a cross-cutting issue since the midterm review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. A range of policies in different sectors is necessary to advance disability-inclusive development and to mainstream disability in development. Mainstreaming disability requires ensuring that the needs, concerns, perspectives and contributions of persons with disabilities are fully taken into account and incorporated into the design, implementation and evaluation of the development of relevant sectoral policies and programmes. Initiatives taken by countries in different regions demonstrate that successful policy interventions often include measures to remove physical, institutional and attitudinal barriers and create enabling environments and conditions that allow all persons with disabilities to participate in and contribute to development on an equal basis with others. It is important to ensure that public services, including clean water and sanitation, public transportation and information and communication technologies, be made universally available in a responsive manner to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Decent work and other income-generating opportunities, as well as social protection floors, are vital for all, especially persons with disabilities, as a means of being lifted out of poverty and securing a sustained and decent livelihood. Of equal importance is investment in human capital and the empowerment of persons with disabilities to compete in labour markets and to pursue their ambitions and entrepreneurship by ensuring their equal access to quality education and skills training opportunities, as well as a variety of financial means and instruments. Necessary resource commitments, including budget allocations and capacity-building, are required. What is most needed, however, is a transformative change that integrates "disability" as a cross-cutting issue in all development agendas and efforts. To this end, awareness concerning the rights, capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities should be further raised to challenge stereotypes and to change mindsets among policymakers, development professionals, civil society, the private sector and the public at large. Renewed commitments to taking concrete action for the inclusion of persons with disabilities are also necessary.

49. To further promote disability mainstreaming and inclusive development for persons with disabilities, the international community can learn from the experience of advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women. The adoption of the visionary Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women, in 1995, set a model in terms of empowering people and ensuring equal opportunities and enabling conditions for their full participation, including in decision-making. To make a significant difference in narrowing the existing gaps and achieving equality, the actual and potential contribution of persons with disabilities must not be overlooked. With the strong political commitments to disability-inclusive

sustainable development, a critical path change is needed to move from good policy intent to an agenda and strategy for action.

50. Disability, as a cross-cutting global issue, should also be mainstreamed in United Nations conferences and their processes and outcomes in relation to all three pillars of the work of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights. It should also be included in processes relating to migration, including the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,[24] to be held in Marrakech, Morocco, in December 2018, and the International Migration Review Forum to be established in 2022.

B. Promoting accessibility: an essential condition for inclusive and sustainable development for all

51. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for all, Member States have taken initiatives and efforts to remove existing barriers for persons with disabilities in compliance with international and domestic legal requirements. Accessibility is well established under the Convention, which sets out the relevant responsibilities of States parties. Accessibility is a means of ensuring equality and non-discrimination and a precondition for ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities. It is also an improvement of infrastructure that facilitates the equal participation and the flourishing in society of all citizens, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

52. It has been increasingly demonstrated that accessibility is also a collective good, with socioeconomic benefits not only for persons with disabilities, but also for other members of society.[25] Investing in accessibility, in line with the principles of universal design,[26] is increasingly embraced as a smart investment.[27] It is also essential for advancing inclusive and sustainable development in all its dimensions: social inclusion, economic growth and environmental sustainability.

C. Reducing disability data gaps

53. To ensure that the commitment to "leave no one behind" is translated into effective action, an accurate understanding of the situation and needs of target populations is critical. Yet, there remains a lack of data disaggregated by disability (see E/2016/75). Emphasizing the importance of high quality, accessible, timely and

[24] In the negotiated draft of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Heads of State and Government and High Representatives agree to take action by applying approaches that are human rights-based, gender- and disability-responsive, and age- and-child-sensitive. The full text of the draft is available at www.un.org/pga/72/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2018/07/migration.pdf.

[25] For example, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Good Practices of Accessible Urban Development: Making Urban Environments Inclusive and Fully Accessible to All*; International Transport Forum, "Economic benefits of improving transport accessibility" (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2017); and Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies, "Benefits and costs of e-accessibility" (2012).

[26] According to article 2 of the Convention, "universal design" means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

[27] Case studies demonstrated that, by investing in accessibility, at least six benefits and competitive advantages could be attained by businesses, including (a) reaching new markets, (b) maximizing employee engagement and productivity, (c) provisioning high quality products and services, (d) improving supply chain management, (e) building partner and community relations and (f) minimizing risk of legal action. See OneVoice for Accessible Information and Communication Technologies, "Accessible information and communication technologies: benefits to business and society" (2010).

reliable data and statistics to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, ministers and high representatives at the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development adopted a declaration in which they urged countries to further strengthen collaboration at the bilateral, regional and global levels for capacity-building and sharing of best practices for collecting, producing, disseminating, analysing and using quality data and statistics, disaggregated by disability (see E/HLS/2018/1, para. 18). In addressing the existing disability data gaps, the Statistical Commission and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators have important roles to play, in particular, in their ongoing work for the development of disability-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators, indexes and tools, in making available statistical data that are disaggregated by disability status.

D. Strengthening the global frameworks and mechanisms relating to disability

54. There exist a number of mechanisms that can be further strengthened to review, follow up and assess progress on the implementation of the global normative frameworks for disability-inclusive development. At the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the main and central platform for the review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, greater attention has been accorded to disability, as Member States have increasingly included references to disability in their voluntary national reviews.[28] The Forum has great potential to address the existing gaps and challenges facing Member States in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities, through its consideration of disability-specific issues under different Goals each year in both voluntary national reviews and the thematic debates of the forum.

55. In response to the mandates of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General submits quinquennial and biennial reports on disability and development. The former provide a longitudinal study on issues and trends relating to disability and development, while the latter review progress made in the advancement of disability-inclusive development. Pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 69/142, the first United Nations flagship report on disability and development: realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities, was prepared in 2018. The report, which is aimed at providing an overall assessment of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities, is a United Nations system-wide effort that demonstrates the importance of presenting evidence, in the form of periodic monitoring and evaluation, in a single official report to better inform Member States and other stakeholders regarding the implementation of the Goals for persons with disabilities.

56. Over the past two decades, the Commission for Social Development has been an important intergovernmental mechanism on disability.[29] The changing global development landscape calls for a strengthened Commission to carry out this important role, including by monitoring and following up the 2030 Agenda in relation to persons with disabilities. In response to a call by the General Assembly and the

[28] In 2016, only 15 (out of 22) reporting countries mentioned disability in their voluntary national reviews; in 2017 and 2018, respectively, 33 (out of 43) and 42 (out of 46) countries did so and reported on their national progress in implementing relevant Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities.

[29] The Commission played a leading role in the drafting of the Convention and also established the former Special Rapporteur on Disability as the first independent international mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

Economic and Social Council,[30] the Commission could, within its existing mandates, regularize the annual organization of the multi-stakeholder panel discussion on the advancement of persons with disabilities in sustainable development, with the aim of reviewing progress, identifying gaps and challenges, sharing good practices and experiences, and generating substantive and action-oriented recommendations on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities as an outcome of the panel discussion.

57. Since its establishment in 2008, the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has played a unique role in the monitoring of the Convention, as both a human rights and a development framework, and has promoted the rights of persons with disabilities in the global agenda. In the course of its 11 sessions to date, the Conference has also served as a forum for sharing good practices in the implementation of the Convention and relevant internationally agreed development goals, including the 2030 Agenda, for persons with disabilities. Given the importance of the Convention as a guiding framework for the implementation of the global agenda by, for and with persons with disabilities, the Conference, as a mechanism to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, can be further strengthened by ensuring the increased participation of delegations and experts with disabilities from the least developed and developing countries in its sessions.

58. As the inclusion of disability in many existing follow-up and review processes relating to the Sustainable Development Goals has been hindered by the lack of quality and disaggregated data on disability,[31] urgent action is needed to ensure that disability-specific Goal indicators are included, data disaggregated by disability status are collected and periodic assessments and reporting take place in relevant forums and mechanisms.

E. Linking global and regional actions

59. The United Nations system, including its regional commissions, together with Member States and other major stakeholders, has been undertaking new initiatives by linking actions at the global level with those at the regional level and thereby promoting disability-inclusive development in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. Initiatives taken have ranged from strengthening regional policies, strategies and plans of action, to increasing resource commitments, to establishing new institutions. For example, at the thirty-sixth session of ECLAC, held in May 2016, Member States established the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development as a regional mechanism to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.[32] ESCAP has been supporting Member States in achieving the Goals for persons with disabilities through the implementation of the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, a regional framework with the first set of regionally agreed disability-specific development goals. The 10 goals are accompanied by 27 targets and 62 indicators (see ESCAP/74/22/Add.1, annex).

[30] General Assembly resolution 71/165 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/12.

[31] For example, in the reports on progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals that have already been issued, there is only one (E/2018/64) in which disability-specific data were available, indicating that only 28 per cent of persons with severe disabilities collected disability cash benefits.

[32] The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2016/12, subsequently endorsed the establishment of the Forum.

V. Recommendations

60. **In the light of the above, the following recommendations on accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by, for and with persons with disabilities may be considered:**

(a) **Member States should review and strengthen national policies, strategies and plans of action aimed at the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure that the rights, needs, perspectives and participation of persons with disabilities are included and mainstreamed systematically in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its follow-up and review;**

(b) **Member States, the United Nations system, international development institutions and other stakeholders, including the private sector, should proactively promote accessibility and increase relevant investment, applying "universal design", for achieving sustainable urban and rural development for all;**

(c) **Member States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders should continue giving due consideration to disability as a cross-cutting issue in forthcoming global conferences, meetings and processes addressing the three pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights. Specific attention should be given to the persistent marginalization of persons with disabilities through awareness-raising, policy interventions and measures to address multi-faceted discrimination and inequalities faced by persons with disabilities, including, in particular, women, children, older persons, the deafblind, persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, indigenous persons, refugees and migrants and those living under adverse circumstances, for example, those who experience negative impacts in instances of natural disasters or humanitarian crises and emergencies;**

(d) **Member States and the United Nations system, in the context of monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, should (i) address existing data gaps by expediting the establishment of a set of clear and measurable disability-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators and (ii) commit necessary resources for capacity-building with regard to the collection and analysis of disability-disaggregated data and statistics to strengthen the evidence base and periodical reporting on the situation of persons with disabilities;**

(e) **Member States, the United Nations system, development agencies and other stakeholders should further promote international cooperation for advancing disability-inclusive development, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships and networking among experts and practitioners on sustainable development, to further the sharing of information, experience, knowledge and best practices and to unlock greater resources in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities. United Nations entities should continue to expand their work to support Governments and develop their capacity for implementing disability-inclusive development;**

(f) **Member States may wish to regularize an annual multi-stakeholder panel discussion on the advancement of the status of persons with disabilities within the framework of the Commission for Social Development, with a view to promoting disability-inclusive development in the context of the 2030 Agenda.**